Update
Project: Meetinghouse Tower
Applicant: Town of Jaffrey

Heavy winds in mid-July 2020 dislodged the balustrade atop the Bell Stage of the Meetinghouse Tower. The northwest corner was the most seriously affected. This portion of the Tower is very difficult to access from inside—one needs to pass through three hatches. It was not possible to inspect safely the damage up close; we were only able to photograph the damage by leaning out from the uppermost hatch.

The upper portions of the Tower were last painted in 2006 so the deterioration has occurred since then. The Bell Stage was last painted in 2018. We became aware of the deterioration at that time but the painter contracted for that work was unable to ascend above the Bell Stage.

Since the wind event consideration was given to removing the balustrade so that it would not pose a safety hazard to those on the ground or do damage to the building. We also considered securing the balustrade in place but we concluded that it would be too dangerous to go out onto the Bell Stage roof to accomplish this. In the end we decided to leave the balustrade in its current condition and hope for the best. (The Meetinghouse is not currently being used because of Covid-19.) It is not clear at the moment whether the balustrade can be repaired and conserved or whether it will need to be removed and completely rebuilt.

Because of the current situation it is now even more critical for the proposed project to proceed in 2021.

Prepared by Robert Stephenson
September 14, 2020

Northwest corner of the Tower showing the state of the Balustrade. July 15, 2020.

Northwest corner of the Bell Stage roof. August 7, 2020.

Northeast corner of the Bell Stage roof. August 7, 2020.

Southeast corner of the Bell Stage roof. August 7, 2020.